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ABSTRACT

This monograph explores the philosophy behind the havruta method of learning. It examines the history of learning be-havruta, describes the benefits, and evaluates whether two models from the world of general education cooperative learning and the cognitive approach may enhance the havruta system. The monograph outlines how this method was applied in a classroom used as a laboratory to test educational techniques. The volume explains that the havruta system blends directly into the experiential side of Torah study. (Contains 27 notes.) (BT)

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Havruta Study: History, Benefits, and Enhancements. Notes from ATID.

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Havruta Study: History, Benefits, and Enhancements

By Aliza Segal

Observe two people studying Torah together as *havrutot*, study partners. This is the lifeblood of Jewish learning, the backbone of Torah study as we know it.[1] There are many positive aspects of the *havruta* system, as this monograph will demonstrate. At the same time, we dare not take it for granted. How may educators best utilize *havruta* time? To do so, we need to reflect upon the implicit goals and intrinsic benefits of *havruta* study, as well as why our institutions have adopted this structure in the first place. Contemplating historical developments and comparing contemporary approaches can impact upon our vision as teachers, and as a result, upon our classroom practice.[2]

When I began teaching *Tanakh* in a post-high school women's *yeshivah*, I reflected upon my experience as a student in a similar environment. Most of the *shiurim* were preceded by *seder*, time spent in the *beit midrash* learning with a *havruta*. I felt that this ad hoc *havruta* system worked well in subjects such as *Gemara*, in which there was a mountain of difficult text to cover before I could be prepared for *shiur*. However, in some *Tanakh* classes, in which the assignment was shorter and reading comprehension was easier, by a few months into the year my *havruta* and I (as well as many of our classmates) could accomplish some of the analysis on our own and even predict the content of the *shiur*. We had learned the method and wanted something different out of both *seder* and *shiur*. This was probably an indication that the teacher was doing a good job of imparting a methodology. Upon further reflection, it may have also meant that the *havruta* time was not always being used to optimal benefit.

How may educators best utilize havruta time?

Now on the other side of the desk, I attempted to strike a balance. *Havruta* time should be genuine preparation for *shiur*, while at the same time the *shiur* should not simply repeat what the students had prepared. I developed a system in which I would provide guiding questions to encourage the students to stretch just beyond their textual and analytical abilities, and then in the *shiur* I would help them understand and integrate the more sophisticated material. Over the course of the semester or year I would gradually make the questions less directed, as I could assume the students were developing independent abilities. For a final project, students would prepare a section of text independently, using the methods they had learned, and either deliver a *shiur* or write a paper. This system worked for me, but I realized that teachers with different goals and styles might need other methods. So I set about investigating the *havruta* system - where and why it originated, and how we may enhance it.

Historical Dimensions

Torah study with a partner seems to carry with it the weight of history and of tradition. It is safe to assume that many of our institutions which implement a modified *havruta*-based learning program - be they *yeshivah* high schools or post-high school *yeshivot* and seminaries - do so because this mode has an air of authenticity. After all, any Orthodox educational institution imparts to its students, at the very least implicitly, the message that they are links in a chain to the past, and that their roots lie in Torah study and observance. This appeal to heritage, in which we aspire to behave as our ancestors did, naturally carries over from the realm of normative practice to the method of theoretical study. In other words, just as students are motivated to anticipate and observe Shabbat in the acclaimed model of Hillel, they are encouraged to sit and learn in dialogue with a partner, in the popular model of Abbaye and Rava.

Torah study with a partner seems to carry with it the weight of history and of tradition.

Some rabbis seem to view the *havruta* method as so rooted in tradition that it is halakhically mandated. For example, one contemporary rabbi is concerned with the practice of many Torah scholars to learn by themselves. The problem is that "*Hazal* were very stringent regarding the punishment of one who learns alone," which he derives from sources such as "Torah is acquired only in a group" (*Berakhot* 63b). That is hardly a clear legal dictum. Indeed, this rabbi begins his responsum by admitting that the legal codes (*Mishneh Torah, Tur, Shulhan Arukh*) do not cite any such prohibition.[3] While he defends the practice of learning alone, the assumption is that today's students of Torah should ideally learn with a *havruta* because this method was practiced, or at least advocated, by the Talmud.

One need not delve as far back as the Amoraic period to appeal to tradition. Many of today's *yeshivot* see themselves as heirs of a later tradition as well. If we limit the discussion to the Ashkenazic or Ashkenazi-influenced realm, the influence of Eastern European *yeshivot* in general and Lithuanian *yeshivot* in particular is palpable. Nineteenth century Volozhin was among the first large *yeshivot* which were independent of the local communal institutions. Its heirs were innovative in promoting students' intellectual experience and personal development in Torah study as the main goal, rather than rabbinic training. This was reflected in the curriculum and methodology, which placed much less emphasis than previous generations on the study of halakhic codes. Instead, the focus was on talmudic analysis - a refined form of *pilpul* (complex analysis) combined with *peshat* (basic textual analysis), and specifically the analytical method championed by Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik of Brisk. These approaches encouraged independence and critical thought in an environment in which each student was able to contribute and innovate, while a focus on *mussar* fostered introspection and moral awareness. Indeed, many contemporary *yeshivot* echo these elements of Volozhin.

The influence of Eastern European *yeshivot* in general and Lithuanian *yeshivot* in particular is palpable.

Volozhin also implemented new pedagogical techniques. One scholar's list of Lithuanian innovations includes *haburot*, group study in which students present material to each other in a model of independence and interdependence; close contact between the *Rosh Yeshivah* and the students in both academic and personal realms; and, interestingly, "study in pairs - with a *havruta* - which gradually eliminates the need for a *rav* in order to fully understand the talmudic text."[4] Others are more conservative as to the widespread nature of the *havruta* style of learning in the Lithuanian *yeshivot*, citing evidence of its occasional implementation but maintaining that it was not the predominant method.[5]

Whether *havruta* learning first became the norm during the period of the Lithuanian *yeshivot*, or was introduced at that time and became the norm only later, the scholars agree that it was indeed an innovation.

Whether *havruta* learning first became the norm during the period of the Lithuanian *yeshivot*, or was introduced at that time and became the norm only later, the scholars agree that it was indeed an innovation.[6] Thus it seems that *havruta* study lacks the halakhic or historic roots for legitimate "tradition appeal"; we learn *be-havruta*, not because "we've always done it this way," but because people in the modern period have decided that it is a good idea. I draw two conclusions from this. First, while nostalgia has its place, the lack of roots for the *havruta* method leaves room for the exploration of alternative or supplementary methods that could enhance the experience of Torah study. Second, there should be some discernible rationale behind not only the initial innovation, but behind its continued implementation as well. In fact, *havruta* study may include cognitive, affective, and even social benefits.

Cognitive Benefits

Conventional wisdom regarding the cognitive goals and benefits of learning with a partner may be expressed in the words of the Talmud: "Two scholars

sharpen each other in [matters of] *halakhah*" (*Ta'anit* 7a; *Shabbat* 63a). Two heads are better than one. A student learns better by serving as a resource to peers, and by being guided by a peer. Common experience in any *beit midrash* confirms this benefit.

There is also a general sense that the act of reading aloud, occasioned by but not limited to *havruta* study, aids in retention of material. Interestingly, reading aloud is indeed part of a Jewish tradition of learning: "The Jewish tradition's 'universal' emphasis upon the value of oral reading is found in works of *halachah* and *aggadah*, ethical wills, and mystical tracts. The most frequent reason offered in the sources for its value is that it aids memory."[7]

The adage "Give a person a fish and you have fed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime" applies well to Torah study.

A third cognitive benefit of *havruta* study - and of *beit midrash* time in general - is the practice and application of textual skills. The adage "Give a person a fish and you have fed him for a day; teach him to fish, and you have fed him for a lifetime" applies well to Torah study. The degree that a particular institution views as a goal the "teaching of fishing," such as the acquisition of textual skills, may be expected to correlate with the amount of time that its students spend in the *beit midrash*.

All of these related but varied goals are cognitive in nature, and may serve as rationales for the *havruta* method.

Affective Benefits

There are also several affective benefits of the experience of learning with a *havruta* in a *beit midrash*. A few of these may be described as religious or spiritual. For example, the very process of Torah study has intrinsic worth. The sense that one is surrounded by books and can easily access them is a comforting thing. Hearing the sounds of the *beit midrash* impacts upon a person's being. Thus in an institution which aspires to mold and inspire a

religious personality, a *beit midrash*-centered program may be the optimal way to learn.

Creativity can be another positive aspect of the *havruta* system. I mentioned above that the Lithuanian *yeshivot* aimed to promote independence, critical thought, and creativity. The student needed to innovate, to contribute to the process of Torah study. Previously, when the goal had been to produce community rabbis who would take on the mantle of halakhic authority, it was crucial to cover material and to know the halakhic codes; it is for such a personality that "the books are our rabbis and our friends."[8] However, when the goal became *Torah lishmah* (Torah study for its own sake), the learning process itself became far more important than the ultimate attainment of knowledge. At this point all the students needed to feel that they were indeed a part of this process, and that they and the Torah that they studied were integrally linked as part of an ongoing and developing chain. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik prescribes this creative aspect as part of a description of the Brisker method: "The Torah study of [the Brisker] school must be authentic, original, bearing the impression of the noetic creation of the thinker. The purpose of study is the conquest of content and new ideas. He must cast his novellae in his own [original] forms, impressing his own thought upon them."[9] It is under the influence of this and related schools of Torah learning that the *havruta* method became desirable, ensuring greater involvement for a broader range of students.

The *havruta* method may have begun as a means for weaker students to get help.

I asked an expert on the *yeshivot* of Eastern Europe to reflect upon when and why the *havruta* system became widespread. He pointed out that *yeshivot* for the elite had had no room for *havrutot*; each student needed to achieve on his own, without a stronger student supporting a weaker one. The *havruta* method may have begun as a means for weaker students to get help.[10] World War I was a turning point, because it was following the war that Torah study became standard for every man in the observant community. As *yeshivot* parted from the elitist tradition and moved toward

inclusion of the masses, many more students entered, and more of them were mediocre. This may be related to the introduction and popularity of *havruta* study.[11]

Interestingly, the conditions described by the scholars are reflected today in high schools and especially in post-high school *yeshivot*. The vast majority of American *yeshivah* high school graduates attend some form of *yeshivah* program in Israel. For most of them, it is their first encounter as "adults" with Jewish texts and ideas, and for some of them, it will be their last formal experience. *Yeshivot* want to inspire these students to study Torah, and to show them that they can take part in that study in a significant and authentic fashion.[12] If the *havruta* system essentially developed to accommodate these needs, we should let it continue filling its role. Furthermore, if student perception is a deciding factor in determining what constitutes authentic traditional study, the *havruta* model may be able to play the tradition card after all.

The *havruta* model may be able to play the tradition card after all.

Beyond the benefits of creativity and a sense of being a link in the chain, there is an experiential side of *havruta* study. While the literature on the psychology of reading has not concluded that reading aloud is better for comprehension and memory than is silent reading, that literature speaks only of memory that is related to information. There is another kind of memory, "memory that is related to meditation," which is marked by involved and active concentration for the purpose of response. This meditation is similar to the experience of oral reading, and seems to reverberate in the *havruta* ideal. We imagine the magic of the spoken word, as well as the "power of the sensitively spoken words of Torah to engage not only the intellectual, but also personal affective experience."[13] This power applies to all parts of Torah study - to *halakhah* and *aggadah*, and to areas ranging from prayer to remembrance of *Amalek* to kabbalistic words of fire. No matter what the curriculum, the aim of a teacher in a *yeshivah* is to inspire the students with the magic and power of the text and tradition, drawing them into the circle.

If the act of reading aloud has such a tremendous impact, it is unthinkable to leave the teaching to the teacher. Reading aloud accompanied by contemplating, analyzing, formulating, and discussing can only serve to enhance the experience of Torah study, as well as the student's connection with it. It is the *havruta* format which, when properly implemented, can reap these benefits for maximal spiritual, emotional, and intellectual impact and growth.

Social Benefits

There are also practical social benefits which may result from, or may even motivate, the use of the *havruta* model in many of today's *yeshivot*. First, *havruta* learning may be described as a "discipline of order." It is difficult for students to sit and study alone for extended periods of time, and it is also unreasonable to expect them to attend classes and lectures from morning to evening. At the same time, a post-high school *yeshivah* is a total immersion environment, in which students are often encouraged or expected to learn into the night. The *havruta* model helps students meet these demands through its peer interaction. The awareness that one's *havruta* is waiting can serve as positive peer pressure to attend, to stay in the *beit midrash*, to stay awake, and to perform.[14]

Havruta learning may be described as a "discipline of order."

Second, there may be a social benefit even in the "down time" in which *havrutot* are not learning. This is commonly condemned as *batalah*, time-wasting. However, recall the fish adage above. Before people can be taught to fish, they must first understand that it is good to eat fish, and then they must internalize that they too can learn to fish. So too, the peer interaction of *havrutot* may foster the personal internalization of what Torah study is all about. Sometimes this "productive *batalah*" is the setting for personal breakthroughs in the realms of spiritual development and commitment to *halakhah*, which are among the goals of *yeshivot*. This is certainly the case in *yeshivot* which cater to entry-level adult Torah study, where in fact the

students may spend the majority of *havruta* time not directly learning the text at hand, but rather discussing its lifestyle-changing implications. Even for advanced *yeshivot* where this is not the norm, some "productive *batalah*" does take place, and, from this perspective, its total elimination is not desirable. Accordingly, one challenge in optimizing *havruta* time is cutting down on wasted time, while still allowing for "productive *batalah*."

I have looked at the *havruta* method and discussed the question of "Why?", in terms of historical, cognitive, and spiritual rationale. The second question is "How?" Simply put, given a block of time in which students should "learn in *havrutot*," what exactly should the students be doing during that time? Which methods should they use?

Cooperative Learning as an Educational Model

Researchers in the field of general education have studied the idea of students learning together in pairs or groups, and such a system, called cooperative learning, has been successfully implemented in many schools. In fact, in my experience teaching in the United States, the teachers were strongly encouraged to adopt any and all such methodologies. If these could be adapted to fit the *havruta* format, I reasoned, Torah study could be enhanced through methods established in general education.

Students in cooperative classrooms come to view their peers as important and valuable sources of knowledge.

Cooperative learning was developed by Morton Deutsch starting in 1949, and has been gaining in popularity since the 1980s. The cooperative classroom is a setting in which "students learn that they can count on their classmates to help when they need help, listen when they have something to contribute, and celebrate their accomplishments. Instead of seeing the teacher as the major resource, students in cooperative classrooms come to view their peers as important and valuable sources of knowledge."[15]

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Several cooperative learning exercises exemplify the system, although the teacher is not bound to any of them. One suggested method is "KWL Columns," in which the teacher announces a topic and then the students, in small groups, fill in columns K and W, "What I *know* about *x*" and "*What* I would like to learn about *x*." They mark which items in the K column have group consensus, and they discuss their entries in the W column as well. During the subsequent lessons on the topic, the students fill in their L columns, "What I have *learned* about *x*." Then they return to groups and spend a few minutes comparing each other's L columns, and also comparing their own L columns with their K columns. In addition to stimulating student interest in the topic, the K and W columns can provide useful feedback to the teacher in terms of how to present the lessons.

Another suggested method is called "Pick Your Spot." The teacher asks a question and offers a number of opinions from which students can select. There are pre-selected spots in the room for each opinion, and the students form a group on each spot based on their choices. Students in each group try to generate as many reasons as possible to support their position. One student presents each group's conclusions to the whole class, and all of the students are given the opportunity to switch groups and to explain which argument was the most persuasive. This structure allows students to adopt positions and discuss them with classmates who share those positions.

In addition to these content-based methods, cooperative learning uses other methods to teach social skills

In addition to these content-based methods, cooperative learning uses other methods to teach social skills, a goal which I will address at greater length later. These methods include the "Label Ladder," which features traits such as "use quiet voices" and "say encouraging words," and charts to identify the visual and verbal characteristics associated with skills such as "getting into our groups quickly and quietly" and "listening."[16]

Cooperative learning lends itself to comparison with *havruta* learning because both are methods in which students work independently in small groups. Since there are more available research materials and teacher-friendly resources on cooperative learning than *havruta* learning, it may be helpful to transfer methods and insights from cooperative learning in general education to *havruta* learning in Jewish education (keeping in mind that cooperative learning is generally geared for younger grades than the *havruta* method). However, before blindly borrowing methods we must explore the integrity of this endeavor in terms of the assumptions and aims of cooperative learning and *havruta* learning.

Cooperative learning lends itself to comparison with *havruta* learning because both are methods in which students work independently in small groups.

I would start by comparing the structures of the two systems. *Havrutot* learn in pairs; cooperative learners study in a group of two to five members.[17] The *seder* in a *yeshivah* is generally separate from the *shiur*; cooperative learning is integrated into the classroom environment. One definition of cooperative learning is "a generic term for various small group interactive instructional procedures." Its methods share the following five characteristics:

1. Students work together on common tasks or learning activities that are best handled through group work.
2. Students work together in small groups containing two to five members.
3. Students use cooperative, pro-social behavior to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities.
4. Students are positively interdependent. Activities are structured so that students need each other to accomplish their common tasks or learning activities.
5. Students are individually accountable or responsible for their work or learning.[18]

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These criteria, with the exception of item 2 and possibly 1, do not typically apply to *havruta* work, at least not overtly or explicitly. Thus the two systems are similar but not identical in structure.

Just as some appeal to tradition and attempt to root *havruta* learning in Talmudic tradition, others try to find cooperative learning in early Jewish sources, especially aggadic passages.[19] While interesting, this thesis is not convincing. If we bring cooperative learning into the *beit midrash*, it must be on its own merits. If a method has something to offer to Torah study, it should be used. The question at hand is whether cooperative learning is a method with which teachers can empower their students as Torah learners.

What, then, are the perceived benefits of cooperative learning? It has been suggested that "Cooperative Learning enhances student learning by

1. providing a shared set of cognitive information between students,
2. motivating students to learn the material,
3. ensuring that students construct their own knowledge,
4. providing formative feedback,
5. developing social and group skills that are necessary for success outside the classroom, and
6. promoting positive social interaction between different cultural and socio-economic groups."[20]

These benefits fall into three categories: the purely social, the purely cognitive, and those which are a mixture of the two. Items 1 and 2 may be characterized as the combination group, while 5 and 6 are social in nature. Benefit 3 is cognitive - a student learns better in a cooperative environment. The characterization of 4 depends upon the type of feedback; cooperative learning may involve cognitive and social feedback from peers, as well as social feedback from the teacher.

It seems that the goals of cooperative learning are mostly social. Before I explore the cognitive side of the equation, it may be worthwhile to assess the degree of applicability of these social goals to the environment of the post-high school *yeshivah*. One caveat is age. While proponents of

cooperative learning maintain that it is appropriate for older students as well, most of the materials relate to primary school and middle school students. We would like to assume that by the time students graduate from high school, they have already acquired many of the social skills which cooperative learning teaches, such as listening to others, taking turns, contributing ideas, explaining oneself clearly, encouraging others, and criticizing ideas and not people. This assessment may be optimistic. However, there is another factor at work as well. The student populations in *yeshivot* do not lend themselves to teaching about respect across cultural lines or for peers of varying levels of ability, because each school - and within schools, each class - is fairly homogeneous in makeup. This is especially true in the more elitist schools, which are generally the most ardent fans of *havruta* learning.

With these hesitations, it is still true that there are crucial social skills to be acquired in high school and beyond, since adolescence is a time when students struggle with a sense of identity and belonging and they begin to take greater responsibility for their decisions and actions. Furthermore, the year abroad carries with it a socialization process in which students are separated from family for an extended period of time and join with a new group of peers for a journey which can be intensely emotional, spiritual, and intellectual in nature.[21] Students learn to live together, sharing space and lifestyle habits; to be supportive in times of physical or emotional distress; and to grow both as individuals and as part of a whole, while dealing with an ever-changing and developing world view. The school staff as a whole certainly carries responsibility for these areas of development, and faculty, administrators, counselors, dorm parents, and the like should all view the students as complex individuals with needs beyond the purely intellectual. These students require social skills which go beyond listening to each other, taking turns, and responding positively. Indeed, *yeshivot* provide not only support staff but also projects, activities, and trips that serve to unify and socialize the students.

While proponents of cooperative learning maintain that it is appropriate for older students as well, most of the materials relate to primary school and middle school students.

However, teaching social skills is not the *yeshivah* teacher's primary role (as it may indeed be in a middle school). Many teachers in *yeshivot* spend only a few hours a week with their students. During that limited time, teachers are there to impart learning skills and content, serve as role models, and develop relationships with students. While teachers should also foster students' personal growth and religious commitment, these goals - while crucial - are not the teachers' primary and direct responsibility. Accordingly, adopting a teaching method primarily because it furthers social goals seems unnecessary, and perhaps even inappropriate.

However, teaching social skills is not the *yeshivah* teacher's primary role

Let us turn now to the possible cognitive benefits of cooperative learning, to see if they accord sufficiently with the goals of *havruta* learning in a *yeshivah* to justify the imposition of the former upon the latter. There are several reasons why cooperative learning is more effective than the standard classroom's competitive approach for promoting students' cognitive growth.

The first benefit is "oral rehearsal." People more effectively refine and express their thoughts when they talk about what they are thinking. This benefit, which I discussed above in the context of Jewish tradition, is shared by cooperative learning and *havruta* learning, and is intrinsic to both systems. However, while oral rehearsal may serve to reinforce the value of learning with a partner, *havruta* study does not require enhancement in this particular area. Therefore, the fact that cooperative learning also allows the student to benefit from oral rehearsal does not significantly contribute to a discussion of whether or not cooperative learning as a method should be brought into the *beit midrash*.

Another cognitive advantage of cooperative learning is "time-on-task," keeping students more focused on the activity at hand than either whole-class instruction or individual work can. This is not a purely cognitive benefit, but rather a facilitating factor. Student focus does not itself constitute better learning, but it does allow more time for that learning to

take place. In the *yeshivah*, time-on-task may actually be reduced by the *havruta* method; while students are reasonably respectful and attentive in the classroom, they tend to waste time talking to their study partners about things unrelated to the material at hand. As I discussed above, a certain amount of this *batalah* may be advantageous, or even necessary. On the other hand, it may be that there is too much *batalah*, partly because teachers are not structuring the *havruta* time optimally. Perhaps if the method of cooperative learning were applied in a relevant manner, *havrutot* would increase their time-on-task.

The third cognitive benefit of cooperative learning is the promotion of controversy. Being confronted with the ideas of others, and needing to present and explain one's own ideas to peers, can help one refine and clarify his or her thoughts and convictions. Controversy is an important factor in learning and development, but as with oral rehearsal, it is inherent in the *havruta* system even without the imposition of cooperative learning.

The final cognitive benefit is that while whole-class discussions tend to involve the lower order thinking skills of knowledge and comprehension, cooperative learning encourages the higher order thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The importance of teaching students to think beyond knowledge and comprehension is especially true in those *yeshivot* which aim to imbue students with an appreciation of the learning process and with the independence necessary to foster a lifelong commitment to continued study. The independence and creativity cultivated in the Lithuanian *yeshivot* is in some ways akin to the higher order thinking skills of the contemporary classroom.

Perhaps if the method of cooperative learning were applied in a relevant manner, *havrutot* would increase their time-on-task.

To summarize the comparison of *havruta* study and cooperative learning, their goals overlap only somewhat. The social skills which cooperative learning teaches are not of primary concern in the post-high school *yeshivah* classroom. Of the four cognitive benefits, two are not exclusive to

cooperative learning, and are in fact part and parcel of the *havruta* method. The other two benefits, increasing time-on-task and implementing higher order thinking skills, are significant, but they alone might not necessitate full implementation of the cooperative learning method. Perhaps partial implementation would be optimal, or perhaps these benefits may be more directly attained by alternate means such as the cognitive approach.

The Cognitive Approach as an Educational Model

Cooperative learning is not the only educational method to foster higher order thinking skills. Championed since the 1970s, the cognitive approach views the teacher as a facilitator, enabling the students to grow and achieve. The goal is to teach skillful thinking and learning.[22]

A model called the "three-story intellect" refers to three levels of thinking.[23] The first level is that of input. The tasks at this stage are associated with knowledge and comprehension, and include describing, identifying, completing, listing, counting, matching, and naming. This class of thinking skills is a necessary prerequisite to but does not in itself constitute the demonstration of higher order thinking.

A model called the "three-story intellect" refers to three levels of thinking.

The second story of the three-story intellect is process. The tasks at this stage relate to analysis, and among them are comparing, contrasting, classifying, sorting, distinguishing, explaining, and inferring. Many educational encounters focus on this level, but it is still not indicative of the mental habits of people who tend to show higher levels of thinking.

The highest levels of thinking appear in activities found at the third story, output. These include evaluating, generalizing, imagining, gauging, predicting, and speculating. By asking questions and giving assignments that involve these skills, teachers can help students develop as better thinkers and learners.[24]

A central component of the cognitive method is metacognition, or thinking about thinking. This awareness of one's own learning process begins in the planning stage, when a person maps out the steps to accomplish a task. In the next phase, monitoring, he or she focuses on both process and content of the task. Finally, when the task is completed, the person reflects consciously on it. This metacognition can help one become a better learner. For example, one can learn to recognize and overcome one's own faulty thinking. This includes thinking which is hasty, narrow, scattered, or fuzzy.[25]

A central component of the cognitive method is metacognition, or thinking about thinking.

The conventional form of assessment, or evaluation, involves a teacher summarizing the students' progress to date. In contrast, the cognitive method declares that assessment should not be summative but formative, to help students understand where they are headed, rather than to reflect upon where they have been. Students should be capable of self-evaluation even years after they have left school. Accordingly, assessment may be done by each student as well as by his or her peers, in addition to the teacher.

The cognitive approach involves small group, whole group, and individual encounters with the material, and most of the learning is not teacher-centered. The methods, such as flowcharts, thought maps, and brainstorming activities, vary with the material and the setting. In *havruta* learning, though, the setting is a given: the small group construct. Thus the possible impact of the cognitive approach upon the *havruta* system may be exemplified through the enhancement of skills which are particular to the small group, or *havruta*-based, educational setting.

One area for potential impact is that of time management skills, learning how best to apportion the allotted time for a task. Another is the disposition for creating strategy, the link between sitting down to learn and learning well. Related to the metacognitive focus described above, this involves pre-textual learning discussion. Finally, there are skills intrinsic to the learning process whose significance is magnified in the *havruta* setting. These

include listening skills and the disposition to withhold judgment. For the cognitive approach, proficiency in these areas is not related to being polite and learning to work with other people, as in cooperative learning. Rather, it is necessary to enhance the learning process. Listening to someone else's thoughts sharpens the student's own thinking skills, as he or she seeks to evaluate what the other person has said and to think about the implications for further application. Withholding judgment means that the student's own thinking may be fine-tuned or even completely revised by the other person's opinion, and both students are thus encouraged to think at higher levels.

Listening to someone else's thoughts sharpens the student's own thinking skills

Through a selective application of methods which represent a cognitive approach to education, teachers may be able to exemplify in their students during *havruta* time the highest levels of thinking and learning. Perhaps such application is the intended meaning of the dictum I cited above, "Two scholars sharpen each other in [matters of] *halakhah*."

From Vision to Implementation

This monograph has left the particulars of implementing the optimal *beit midrash* environment to the research, discretion, and imagination of the individual educator (and ideally the administrator as well).[26] Teaching guides usually stress that it is not wise to implement a new method, such as cooperative learning or the cognitive approach to education, all at once; rather, comfort and proficiency take time. When it comes to curricular innovation, there are three components of successful school-wide implementation efforts: (1) developmentalism - preparation, changes, and refinement, (2) participation - teacher involvement in decisions made before and during implementation, and (3) support - including material and human resources. On the teacher level, these three components may be translated as thought, flexibility, and commitment.[27]

Not all areas of the educational methods outlined above can or should be transferred to the *beit midrash* of a high school or post-high school *yeshivah*. Rather, teachers faced with a modified *havruta* format should reflect, both in general and with each lesson plan, on what the aims of the format are. They can then consider how best to attain these aims in the context of a particular *sugya*. Finally, they should avail themselves of whatever educational tools can facilitate this, and apply them with variation and in palatable doses. The time spent learning with a *havruta* can and should be productive in myriad ways and on many levels, and those teachers who help their students achieve this have given them the gift of discovery and illumination in their continued Torah study.

Not all areas of the educational methods outlined above can or should be transferred to the *beit midrash*

Afterword: A Personal Note

While writing this monograph, I used my own classroom as a laboratory for testing various educational techniques. For example, during *havruta* time the students worked primarily in twos but occasionally in fours, and on several occasions changed partners for a particular *sugya*. They would write down and share with their partners statements such as "What I have learned about..." and "What I would still like to know about..." During *shiur,* I tried "10-2," in which every ten minutes of lecture were followed by two minutes of processing time. I asked my students to list and describe the new methods we were using and to find examples of their application in other texts which they could choose.

On the whole, these attempts met with a high level of success. My students indicated that they appreciated the variety, and I felt that the methods had "gimmick value" in addition to their presumed "thinking value." However, I am inclined to use these methods occasionally to enliven my teaching,

rather than to revamp it totally. In other words, I prefer selective application to wholesale borrowing.

The more significant - and certainly unexpected - result of working on this monograph was the changed perception that I have of myself as a teacher. I have adopted a much more holistic view of the role of the teacher in the classroom, to include not only the immediate material but also whatever would fulfill the affective or experiential goals of a Torah educational environment.

Previously, my personal focus had invariably been textual, and for lack of a better term, intellectual. I assumed that the Torah which I teach always speaks for itself. True, I had developed relationships with students, offered a listening ear, and opened my Shabbat table, viewing these as part of my responsibilities outside the classroom. But it seemed to me that those teachers who used the classroom as a pulpit from which to preach their own ideas, or who elaborated on their own experiences in the course of classroom discussion, were sidetracked from the business of teaching. The students seemed to agree, associating those characteristics with less rigorous teaching.

I have adopted a much more holistic view of the role of the teacher in the classroom

However, I have come to realize that development of *ahavat Torah* and *yir'at shamayim* are too crucial to leave to osmosis, and that we should acknowledge and embrace these latent goals.

As this monograph has demonstrated, the *havruta* system plays directly into this experiential side of Torah study. Accordingly, it is all the more important that we not only preserve the integrity of *havruta* learning, but enhance it through the judicious use of appropriate educational methods, and undertake periodic review to ensure it serves the larger goals to which we strive.

[1] For the dynamics of the *havruta* learning process, see Gilla Rosen, "Empathy and Aggression in Torah Study: Analysis of a Talmudic Description of *Havruta* Learning," in Jeffrey Saks and Susan Handelman, *Wisdom From All My Teachers: Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education* (Jerusalem: ATID/Urim Publications, 2003).

[2] *Havrutot* may learn in a variety of venues: high school, post-high school, or informal settings. I leave it to the intelligent reader to tailor the content of this monograph to his or her own situation.

[3] R. Shammai Kehat Gross, *Shevet HaKehati* (Jerusalem, 1986), vol. 1, #364. See also R. Menashe Klein, *Mishneh Halakhot - Mador HaTeshuvot* (Brooklyn: Machon Mishneh Halakhot Gedolot, 1987), vol. 10, #156.

[4] Yeshayahu Tishbi, "*Yeshivot Lita*," *HaEncyclopedia Halvri* (1979), vol. 17, s.v. *HaHinukh HaYehudi*, p. 689.

[5] Shaul Stampfer, *HaYeshivah HaLita'it BeHithavutah* (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 50, 127, 146-49, 281. For the innovations of the Volozhin *yeshivah*, see Stampfer, pp. 31-52.

[6] The practice in pre-nineteenth century Eastern Europe was for each student to learn alone, and only those deemed capable of doing so at an advanced level were permitted to study in the local *beit midrash* and subsist on communal resources. See Shaul Stampfer, "*Heder* Study, Knowledge of Torah, and the Maintenance of Social Stratification in Traditional East European Jewish Society," *Studies in Jewish Education 3* (1988), pp. 271-89.

[7] Steven Copeland, "The Oral Reading Experience in Jewish Learning," *Studies in Jewish Education 2* (1984), p. 194.

[8] R. Menashe Klein, *op. cit.* He uses this phrase in the context of arguing that any prohibitions relating to learning alone applied at a time when all Oral Law was indeed studied orally; today, however, "the books are our rabbis and our friends."

[9] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "*Mah Dodekh MiDod*," in his *Divrei Hagut VeHa'arakhah* (Jerusalem: WZO, 1982), p. 83.

[10] This is reminiscent of cooperative learning's heterogeneous groups (see below), although in the latter, it is generally posited that each student has some area of strength and that students will learn to appreciate each others' complementary strengths and weaknesses.

[11] Shaul Stampfer, Personal Interview (by telephone), January 12, 2000.

[12] See Yoel Finkelman, "Virtual Volozhin: Socialization vs. Learning in Israel Yeshivah Programs," in Saks and Handelman.

[13] Copeland, pp. 199-201, 204.

[14] Compare the "time-on-task" benefit of cooperative learning discussed below.

[15] Susan S. Ellis and Susan F. Whalen, *Cooperative Learning: Getting Started* (New York: Scholastic, 1990), pp. 12, 14. Since cooperative learning is formulated for elementary school, and for exercises that last for minutes, its application to hours-long *havruta* study in high school and beyond must not be done randomly or haphazardly.

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-70, 39-45.

[17] This guideline represents the most inclusive range. Ellis and Whalen advocate two to three students per group for primary school children, with a possible shift to four in middle school. Others recommend three to four students per group.

[18] Barbara J. Millis, "Cooperative Learning," Presentation at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Instructional Excellence Retreat, May 1996. Available at http://www.utc.edu/Teaching-Resource-Center/CoopLear.html.

[19] R. Yehudah Shaviv, "*Lemidah Shitufit BeHinnukh HaYehudi*," *Iyyunim BeHinnukh* 51-2 (5760), pp. 63-72, argues that the story of Rabbi Hiyya, the transient teacher, foreshadows cooperative learning's jigsaw method, in which each student learns different material, and the group assembles the "puzzle." This method is championed by Elliot Aronson, *The Jigsaw Classroom* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1978). After all, Rabbi Hiyya made one copy of each book, a total of five for *Tanakh* and six for *Mishnah*, and traveled from town to town leaving each student with one book and instructions to teach the others the material by the time he returned (*Ketuvot* 103b). However, the context demonstrates that R. Hiyya implemented this method for practical reasons - books were difficult to produce, and one teacher serviced many towns - rather than for direct educational concerns. Another attempted proof, in this case supporting heterogeneous groups of five, is from Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, who had five students with a range of strengths (*Avot* 2:10-11). However, it is not clear that they even studied together as a group, let alone that he purposely grouped them for their heterogeneity.

[20] Millis, *op.cit.*

[21] See Dodi F. Tobin, " The Post-High School Year in Israel: Parent-Child Relationships and Religious Growth," in Saks and Handelman.

[22] For an argument why *yeshivot* should teach skillful thinking, see Rabbi Aharon Hersh Fried, "Teaching Thinking Skills in the Judaic Studies Curriculum," *Jewish Action* (September 1989), pp. 72-4. I was inspired to describe the teacher as facilitator by the "teacher as" metaphors in Gary Fenstermacher and Jonas Soltis, *Approaches to Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986). The teacher's conception of his or her role is directly related to the methods that he or she will use in the classroom, in terms of choice, comfort level, and effectiveness.

[23] Arthur L. Costa and Bena Kallick, *Teaching and Assessing Habits of Mind* (Highlands Ranch, CO: Search Models Unlimited, 1998), p. 44.

[24] For a slightly different presentation of what Costa calls the output level, see David Perkins, *Smart Schools* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), pp. 75-9.

[25] See *Infusing Thinking into Instruction - Elementary* (Pacific Grove, CA: Critical Thinking Press and Software, 1994), p.32.

[26] For additional suggestions of how to transfer the *havruta* method to the day school classroom, see Rabbi Yisroel Boruch Sufrin, "*Chavruta* in the Classroom," *Ten Da'at* 3:1 (Fall 1988), pp. 25-6.

[27] Bennett Solomon, "Curriculum Innovation: What Jewish Education Must Learn From Educational Research," *Studies in Jewish Education* 4 (1989), pp. 67-83.

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This monograph explores the philosophy behind the *havruta* method of learning. The author examines the history of learning *be-havruta*, describes the benefits, and evaluates whether two models from the world of general education - cooperative learning and the cognitive approach - may enhance the *havruta* system.

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